

Ochoco and Deschutes National Forests and  
Prineville District, Bureau of Land Management  
Office of Communications  
*Working as One to Serve Central Oregon*

News and Information  
For Immediate Release  
September 23, 2002

Contacts: Virginia Gibbons (541) 416-6647  
Don Hicks (541) 416-6700

**Source of Irritation Identified at Prineville BLM Office**

Prineville, OR—Investigators have determined the substance that caused the closure of the Prineville District of the Bureau of Land Management office for 3 days last week. The substance has been identified as capsaicin, a compound found in hot peppers and chilies.

The Prineville BLM office was shut down on Friday, September 13, after several employees and firefighters experienced medical symptoms ranging from coughing and running eyes to tightness in the chest. Three employees were taken to area hospital emergency rooms. All affected individuals have recovered and no additional employees have developed symptoms.

Tests on air and water quality included large-scale tests of ventilation and water systems in the building to be sure they were clear of harmful substances as well as tests of air samples within offices and individual water fixtures. A certified industrial hygienist reviewed the sampling results and determined that the air and water systems within the building are safe for human occupancy.

The investigation is ongoing. “We have yet to determine why this substance was in the building,” said Prineville District Manager Barron Bail.

-end-